

# Arizona Republic Editorial

## Over the limit, under arrest

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The senseless bloodshed from drunken driving continues. The toll in Arizona last year was almost one death a day.

Even more tragic and alarming is the trend.

The 362 fatalities from accidents with legally impaired drivers or motorcycle operators were 8 percent more than in 2004, according to figures released in late August by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Arizona law enforcement agencies are ramping up efforts to reverse the trend as part of a national awareness campaign over the Labor Day weekend.

Task forces will hit the road with more officers than ever trained in recognizing impaired drivers and more sophisticated breath-analyzing machines. It's a welcome reminder that maybe we're getting a bit complacent. Clearly, we need to sharpen our tools to keep drinkers from driving.

America needs to recover the momentum that dramatically reduced alcohol-related fatalities. Despite a growing population and more driving, the number of deaths fell from more than 25,000 in 1982 to fewer than 16,000 in 1998.

But we've been stalled for nearly a decade. This year's death toll of 16,885 is virtually unchanged from last year.

As for Arizona's shameful increase - don't blame population growth. The deaths related to DUI rose at more than double the pace of our population increase in the past year

Here is just some of the recent carnage from drivers suspected of being under the influence:

- Rear-ending a vehicle in Scottsdale, killing the woman inside.
- Plowing into a block wall in Peoria, snuffing out the life of a passenger.
- Slamming into a motor-scooter rider in Mesa.
- Jumping the median on a Phoenix freeway exit and smashing into another car, killing the driver.

So many people would still be working, playing, studying, spending time with their loved ones - if only a drinker had called a cab, gone with a designated driver or phoned a sober friend for a ride.

In April, Gilbert police officer Rob Targosz was riding his motorcycle to work when a suspected drunken driver crashed into him.

The 12-year police veteran was on his way to a DUI detail. He didn't make it.

What will it take to stop the slaughter?

This year's national slogan emphasizes enforcement, not safety: Drunk Driving: Over the Limit. Under Arrest.

Arizona needs to hammer home that message.